

## All in the Family - Part III

by Walrus

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Summary: Fifteen years after their marriage an old enemy comes back to threaten those Lee and Amanda love.

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## All in the Family

### Part III

Four hours later Amanda was standing in her kitchen cutting vegetables lost in thought about Assi Birol. "Earth to Amanda," she heard her mother's voice break through her nightmare, "Amanda!"

"I'm sorry, what were you saying Mother?" Amanda tried hard to focus on her Mother.

"Honestly, Amanda," Dotty scolded. "You've cut those carrots into micro-bites. What is bothering you tonight? I thought you'd be excited with the boys coming for dinner and all."

"I'm sorry mother, just lost in thought I guess." Amanda tried to force her voice to sound light.

"Amanda Stetson, I have known you all of your life, and I know when you're hiding something. Well, except for the whole spy thing that you managed to keep from me for almost ten years, but none-the-less I know when something is bothering my daughter. Now, are you going to tell me, or..." Dotty lowered her voice to a mysterious tone, "is this one of those need-to-know things?"

"Mother, I'm fine, really." Amanda said with a chuckle, "And I am excited about tonight. It will be so good to be together as a

family."

"Mommy," Jenny called bounding into the kitchen, "can I help with dinner?"

"Of course you can sweetheart," Amanda glowed at her daughter. 'She's perfect' Amanda thought as she handed Jenny some lettuce to shred. Jenny had Amanda's tiny frame and thick dark hair, but it was her father that she really took after. Amanda felt as though she could almost see the child that Lee had once been reflected in their daughter's eyes.

As Jenny was finishing with the lettuce the front door opened and Lee called out, "I'm home!"

"Daddy!" Jenny screamed as she ran into the hall and threw herself into her father's arms. Lee swooped the little girl up and carried her back into the kitchen. He glanced around the sunny kitchen and smiled. Over the years he and Amanda had talked about selling the house in Arlington for something bigger. Yet, neither one of them could really bear the thought of leaving. This house was too much a part of them, a part of their beginning, to let it go. Lee was just thankful that he was now allowed to watch her move around the house without having to resort to peeping through the kitchen window.

"I've missed you today, pumpkin," he said. "What have you been up to all day?"

"We wrote stories about our families in school today," she replied. "Want to see mine?"

"You bet I do," Lee replied putting his daughter down so that she could race from the kitchen to locate the coveted story.

As soon as Jenny had left the room Lee crossed over to where Amanda was putting the finishing touches on a roast and wrapped his arms around her waist. As he nuzzled her neck he mumbled, "Oh, I've missed you."

"Lee we've been apart all of 4 hours," Amanda attempted to admonish her husband. Yet, it was difficult to rebuke him when he had her earlobe firmly in his teeth. "Then again, I think it felt like 5 days," she purred as Lee let his thumb discreetly caress the underside of her breast.

Lost in one another Lee and Amanda didn't even hear the front door open. It wasn't until they heard Jenny scream, "Jamie's here!" that Amanda pulled herself reluctantly out of Lee's embrace. They both moved into the foyer to greet Jamie just in time to see him swing Jenny up onto his shoulders.

"How's my Jenny-bean?" he asked.

The little girl giggled hysterically in reply as Jamie lowered her back to the ground.

Kisses and hugs were exchanged as the adults all moved toward the living room. "Oh sweetheart, It's so good to see you." Amanda said as she followed her son into the living room. She couldn't believe how

her boys had grown. It seemed like only yesterday that Jamie had been a skinny ten-year-old with coke bottle glasses. Now he was a grown man; the glasses had been replaced by contacts and his stick figure had filled out into the muscular shape of a man. It had all happened so fast, and now Jenny seemed to be growing just as quickly.

"It's good to be here, Mom," Jamie replied. "What can I do to help?"

"Absolutely nothing." Amanda told her son. "Your grandmother and I almost have dinner ready, and Jenny's going to set the table for me, right pumpkin?"

With that Amanda, Dotty, and Jenny headed for the kitchen. Lee knew that Amanda had purposely left him and Jamie alone. After Lee's observation that Jamie had seemed down earlier, Lee knew Amanda wanted to give them a little time to have some "guy talk."

"So, Jamie," he began. "What's new?"

"Not much," Jamie answered in an all too chipper tune, "same ol', same ol'."

"Jamie, you know I don't buy that - what gives?" Lee stared his stepson down in much the same fashion that he stared down suspects. For all the issues they had had when Jamie was young, Jamie hadn't had a problem Lee couldn't get out of him yet, and he didn't plan on starting now.

"It's nothing, really. I... I've been seeing someone," Jamie began nervously, "or rather, I was seeing someone."

"What happened? Why haven't you said anything before now?" Lee asked.

"I've only been seeing her for two months." Jamie replied.

"Two months!" Lee looked at his stepson dumfounded. "And you're just now getting around to bring her up?! What's wrong with her?"

"Give me a break Lee," Jamie looked at his Stepfather with an amused smile, "There's nothing wrong with her. It's just that it was kind of nice to be the one with the secret for a change. Not that it really matters anymore. We broke up last night."

"Point well taken," Lee laughed calming down, "What happened?"

"That's just it," Jamie moaned, "I have no idea. Things were going really well. I know I haven't known her for very long, but I could really see myself falling for this girl. Then last night, right in the middle of dinner she blurts out that she can't see me anymore. Then she gave me some lame excuse about the timing just not being right, and how busy she was at work. The whole thing was very surreal."

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"Hello! Anybody home?" both Jamie and Lee jumped at the sound of Phillip bounding into the house.

"Lee," Jamie glanced at the door nervously, "let's not talk about this tonight. Nobody even knew I was seeing her, and I just don't want to deal with Phillip's opinions about my love life tonight."

"Sure thing." Lee reached over and patted Jamie on the shoulder as they moved toward the door to greet Phillip. At 28 Phillip reminded Lee a lot of himself at that age. He thought he had women completely figured out, after all he dated someone new almost every week. 'Boy is he going to be surprised when he meets that girl that shows him how little he really knows' Lee thought with a chuckle.

"Attention! Hey! Everybody!" Amanda was trying her best to get her family's attention above the buzz of chatter in her living room. Finally she glanced over at Lee with a pleading look and he let out a loud whistle.

"Thank you." Amanda smiled at her husband. "Now everybody listen up. Lee and I have invited a friend from work to dinner tonight. She's been having a little bit of a hard time lately, and I just want to make sure you're all on your best behavior."

"She," Phillip started. "Is she hot?"

"Phillip!" Amanda admonished, "That is exactly what I mean. I expect you all to make her feel welcome - but not that welcome. Understood?"

"Alright," Phillip answered with a sly grin, just as the doorbell chimed.

"Hold it!" Amanda pointed a finger at her son, "Stay right where you are - I'm going to get the door. Remember what I said."

Amanda let Elizabeth in and they moved back toward the living room. As they reached the door Amanda began the introductions. "Everybody this is..."

"ELIZABETH?!" Jamie cried.

"Jamie...." Elizabeth's voice trailed off as all the color drained from her face.

"No, no, no!" Jamie moaned as he sunk back into an armchair. "This is not happening. I just know that for the second time in my life I have not just discovered that someone I love is a spy. I don't believe it; I refuse to believe it. Things like this just don't happen to normal people and I am a normal person." Jamie continued more to himself than anyone else.

"Jamie King is your son?" Elizabeth turned to Amanda in disbelief.

"Tell me Jamie's not the guy you were in my office talking about this morning?" Amanda asked Elizabeth without really even expecting an answer. From the look on her son's face the answer was obvious.

"Jamie..." Elizabeth started to move toward him. Yet, just as she

reached out to touch him he snapped out of the shock that had been holding him captive for the last few moments.

Jamie pushed her hand away and stood up. "Save it Elizabeth," he cried angrily. "I don't want to hear it. You know, it all makes sense now. How you were this reporter whose column I never could seem to find. All the dinners that you would get up and run out of because there was 'breaking news' that just never seemed to hit my TV. And last night, the 'job' that was so important that you couldn't see me anymore? I just can't believe I fell for this, twice none-the-less!" With each word Jamie's tone rose and his face became redder and redder.

"Jamie, I never meant to hurt to you." Elizabeth declared forgetting that she had a room full of open-mouthed witnesses. "I was trying to protect you. Never in my whole life have I met anyone like you. I just didn't want you anywhere near this world that I live in. I was falling in love with you, and that made you a target."

"Where have I heard that before?" Jamie spat bitterly.

Suddenly very aware of their audience Elizabeth once again made a move toward him, "Let's go somewhere and talk." She offered.

"I don't think so." Jamie shot her a look of pure hatred; "I've heard enough to last me a lifetime." With that he turned and bolted from the house slamming the door behind him.

Stunned, all eyes in the room turned to Elizabeth. Her dark eyes reflected the shock Amanda felt. "I... I'm sorry." Elizabeth managed to stammer out hugging her arms to her chest, "I better go."

"Elizabeth wait!" Amanda grabbed her friend. "You don't have to leave. He'll calm down. Please stay, we need to talk about this."

"Amanda really, that's not necessary." Elizabeth grabbed her coat and moved toward the door. She would not loose it in their living room, but she had to get out before the walls caved in around her. "I'll be fine. Just let me go. I'll see you in the morning." With as much dignity as she could muster she turned and walked out the door.

It was Phillip who broke the silence that followed the sound of the door closing behind Elizabeth. "That little weasel," Phillip remarked. "I always figured I'd be the one to date the hot lady spy."

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